

DENNIS A. ROSS
15TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND INSURANCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS
AND CONSUMER CREDIT

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
INVESTIGATIONS

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR, ENERGY,
AND ENVIRONMENT

SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
436 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

October 26, 2017

☐ **WASHINGTON, DC**
436 CANNON HOB
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
PHONE: (202) 225-1252
FAX: (202) 225-0555

☐ **LAKELAND**
170 FITZGERALD ROAD, SUITE 1
LAKELAND, FL 33813
PHONE: (863) 644-8215
FAX: (863) 648-0749

☐ **PLANT CITY**
110 W. REYNOLDS STREET, SUITE 101
PLANT CITY, FL 33563
PHONE: (813) 752-4790
FAX: (863) 648-0749

☐ **CLERMONT**
685 W. MONTROSE STREET
CLERMONT, FL 34711
PHONE: (352) 727-2246
FAX: (863) 648-0749

[HTTP://DENNISROSS.HOUSE.GOV](http://DENNISROSS.HOUSE.GOV)

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

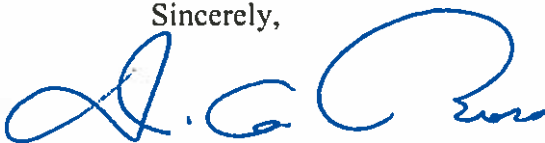
I write to request your immediate assistance with the City of Winter Haven (City)'s, Florida, efforts to secure an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife (USFWS) for their Lake Maude Park project. Over the course of the past two years, Winter Haven has repeatedly contacted USFWS about its application for an ITP, and has not received an adequate response from USFWS. I respectfully request that the USFWS respond and promptly address the City's application.

As you are aware, the Florida Sand Skink is a USFWS designated "threatened" species, the habitat of which was identified on property boundaries of the Lake Maude Park project site in 2016. As such, the City and its consultants submitted an ITP application in June of 2016. Throughout the City's application process, the USFWS has consistently failed to provide updates or even respond to routine inquiries regarding their application review.

The City has acquired all necessary permits involved with the construction of the facility, with the exception of the sand skink's ITP. Furthermore, the City has completed the bidding process for the project and is ready to award the contract and begin construction. However, should the City not begin construction within the next three months, one of the contractors will pull out of the contract, placing the entire project in financial jeopardy. Any delay in the building process will have adverse effects on the City of Winter Haven and local community.

Given the time constraints upon which the City is operating, I respectfully request and urge the USFWS to work with the City of Winter Haven to immediately respond and address the City's application. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact my Legislative Analyst, Hailey Hart, at Hailey.Hart@mail.house.gov or 202-225-1252. I thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Dennis A. Ross
Member of Congress